A Brief outline of the History of The Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine

1884-1938

Revised Edition

S. JOHN'S HOUSE AND CONVENT ON MAJOR STREET

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THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNITY

Exactly half a century ago, in the spring of the year, 1881, a little group of devout Churchpeople in Toronto were discussing ways and means by which they could best express their gratitude to GOD for the blessings bestowed upon them in a Mission which had been held a few weeks before. Just at the same time a woman —who had been born in Canada, had lived in England, and had become a widow—was preparing to obey GOD's call to devote the remainder of her life to His service. In the working out of the Divine purpose they met in Toronto in 1882. As a result of that meeting the human plans of all were changed and overruled.

The detailed story of the founding of the Sisterhood may be read in *Hannah Grier Coome: A Memoir*, the biography of the Mother Foundress written by one of the early members of the Community, and a brief note must suffice here. Hannah Grier was born on October 28, 1837, being the third daughter and sixth child of the Reverend John Grier and his wife, Eliza Lilias Geddes. Miss Rose Grier, the well-known Principal of the Bishop Strachan School, was an older sister of the Mother Foundress. Her father came from Ireland in 1823, and was ordained deacon and priest at the Cathedral in Quebec. He was S.P.G. Missionary at the Carrying Place, just south of Trenton, from 1824 to 1841, when he was appointed by the Crown as Rector of S. Thomas' Church, Belleville, where he remained until his death in 1871. In 1859, Miss Hannah Grier was married to Mr. Charles H. Coome, a young English engineer who was assisting in the building of the Grand Trunk Railway. Most of their married life was spent in England. Mr. Coome died in August, 1878, in Chicago.

Instead of bringing out members of an English Order to open a Branch House for some local work of charity, it was decided that a Community for women should be established in Canada. Instead of returning to England to enter the Community of Saint Mary the Virgin at Wantage, Mrs. Coome was to be trained in America to take charge of the new venture. The Sisters of Saint Mary, the first American Order, whose Mother House is at Peekskill N.Y., very kindly consented to take her into their Novitiate and to prepare her for her future life. On the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, 1884, she was professed as a Sister of Saint John

the Divine. Thus the first Canadian Religious Order in the Anglican Church came into being, with Sister Hannah as its Mother Foundress.

It is interesting to read the records which tell of the plans and preparations made during the three years from 1881 to 1884. After the first informal conferences, a Toronto priest, who was going to England, was commissioned to see some of the leaders of the Church in that country and to enlist their help in bringing "real Sisters" out to Canada. His mission was not altogether fruitless, although no English Order at that time had Sisters to spare for work so far away, for at least it directed the attention of a group of very influential men to the needs of Canada and aroused their sympathy which showed itself the next year in a practical way.

When the news came back that Sisters could not be secured from England, the little band of Churchpeople was disappointed but undaunted. In the autumn a small meeting was held in Mrs. F. D. Barwick's drawing-room, when the Reverend O. P. Ford, Miss Grier, Mrs. MacLean Howard and Mrs. Broughall were present. They decided to go on with their scheme, and to send out a circular asking for five thousand dollars to launch it.

> "God loves the valiant foe; He comes not out to meet
> The craven soul, made captive of its fear."*

In the months of February and April following, two public meetings were held, one at St. Luke's, the other at St. George's. At the latter the Reverend Provost Whitaker, the Reverend John Langtry, the Reverend O. P. Ford, Dr. Playter and Mr. J. R. Cartwright spoke. The result was a unanimous decision approving the foundation of a Sisterhood in Toronto and appointing a large General Committee to secure funds. The long list of sixty-two names, printed elsewhere in the pamphlet, included many of the best known Churchpeople in this part of Canada at that time.

All seemed well under way now except for the one indispensable person—a Sister to take charge of the foundation!

Then came Mrs. Coome's momentous visit to Toronto, to say good-bye to her mother before leaving for Wantage. A garden-party at Bishop Strachan School, Committee meetings in Toronto, letters to and from the United States, and the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese, must have followed in very rapid succession, for on June 20th she was taking the train to New York, not to sail for England, but to enter the Novitiate of the American Sisterhood of Saint Mary.

Matters did not cease to move rapidly now. One of the conditions laid down by the Foundress when she gave her promise to take

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*Evelyn Underhill.

charge of the new Community, had been that the Sisters were not to beg for their support; the money must be raised by others. Before the end of the year we find an influential English Committee—the names of the members, to be found on page 8 speak for themselves —sending out a circular letter in which they stated that £2,000 had been given in Canada towards an endowment, and they hoped that £1,500 of the balance of the £5,000 desired might come from England. This money was invested later in the building of the Convent on Major Street.

A campaign of education was also going on in Toronto. At the monthly meetings, held primarily for sewing and making the furnishings for the future house, books dealing with the history and principles of the Religious Life were being read; and larger public gatherings were being addressed by such men as Bishop Quintard of Tennessee, Bishop Seymour of Springfield, Father Hall, S.S.J.E. (later Bishop of Vermont), who had all had intimate personal knowledge of the life and work of Sisters. Such education was very necessary, not only because Sisters in the Anglican Communion were to most people a "novelty", but because there were strong barriers of prejudice as well as of ignorance, to be broken down.

While the Committees in Canada and in England were thus hard at work, there were two persons who were making still more intensive preparation—Mrs. Coome and Father Ford.

The Mother Foundress was living the ordinary life of a Novice in the Community of Saint Mary, and so well was the secret of her future destiny guarded by the Superiors there that few knew until the day of her profession that she was not entering that Order for life.

It is not possible in this historical sketch to write much concerning her great gifts and the power of her personality. These may be read in the biography to which reference has been made. She had, however, while living in England, become thoroughly skilled in the arts of fine needlework and embroidery. She had also an unusual knowledge of architecture, which proved a valuable asset to the Community in later days. To these accomplishments she was now adding a practical knowledge of nursing in S. Mary's Hospital for Children; she was being brought into close association with the educational work and the operation of the House of Mercy, carried on by the American Community; and above all, she was receiving a thorough training in the fundamental principles of the Religious Life, which had been established so wisely and well at Peekskill under the influence of Mother Harriet, C.S.M., and Dr. Morgan Dix.

At last the great day of her profession came, September 8, 1884, the birthday of the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine. In the morning her vows were received by the Bishop of New York;

THE MOTHER FOUNDRESS, S.S.J.D.

the Bishop of Springfield, Dr. Houghton, Dr. Dix, Canon and Mrs. Broughall being also present at the service. In the evening she left for Toronto to take up the work to which her life was now pledged.

The first few days after her arrival were spent in an unexpected call of charity, but on Holy Cross Day, September 14th, she found herself established, (with one or two others who had been awaiting her arrival to test their vocation), in the little house on Robinson Street, which had been taken to be the first Home of the Community.

It was decided that the Reverend O. P. Ford should be the First Warden and Chaplain of the Community when it was established. The choice was natural and wise. He was a Canadian, born in Brockville, and had graduated from Trinity College, Toronto, in 1868, with First Class Honours in Classics and Mathematics. His spiritual and intellectual gifts were outstanding, and he had long been praying and quietly working for the establishment of Orders, both for men and women, in Canada. To fit himself for the direction of the new Sisterhood, he had gone to spend a year at Cowley in order that he might live in the atmosphere of the Religious Life and have the benefit of the advice of Father Benson regarding the future. Upon his return he attempted for two years to carry on the work of his old mission at Woodbridge, while paying frequent visits to Toronto to serve the Sisterhood and others who looked to him for help. This double duty proved to be too much, so in 1886 he resigned the mission in the country and became Assistant Priest in S. Luke's Parish, in order that he might devote the greater part of his time and strength to the building up of the Community. The time on earth was to be shorter than he knew, the strength to be less. During the following year he was taken ill, and after many months of suffering he died. Humanly speaking, this seemed to be a great loss to the little Community. Actually the Sisters know not what they owe to his higher ministry in Paradise, and day by day they continue to praise GOD for the ministrations of Ogden, the First Warden, which is surely going on still.

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THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEES

Appointed in 1882 to Secure Funds for the Support of a Sisterhood in Canada

THE CANADIAN COMMITTEE:

The Very Rev. the Dean of Ontario, Kingston.
The Rev. A. J. Broughall, Toronto.
The Rev. W. Burke, Belleville.
The Rev. Canon Bleasdell, Trenton.
The Rev. C. J. S. Bethune, M. A., Port Hope.
The Rev. J. D. Cayley, M.A., Toronto.
The Rev. H. W. Davies, D.D., Toronto.
The Rev. Charles Darling, B.A., Toronto.
The Rev. Ogden P. Ford, M.A., Woodbridge.
The Rev. A. J. Fidler, B.A., Whitby.
The Rev. R. Harrison, M.A., Toronto.
The Rev. John Langtry, M.A., Toronto.
The Rev. E. Loucks, Picton.
The Rev. C. H. Mockridge, B.D., Hamilton.
The Rev. A. W. Macnab, M.A., St. Catharines.
The Rev. — Ridley, Tuscarora.
The Rev. C. H. Shortt, B.A., Toronto.
The Rev. R. G. Sutherland, B.A., Hamilton.
The Rev. H. Wilson, D.D., Kingston.
The Rev. J. McLean Ballard, B.A., Toronto.
Dr. J. H. Burns, Toronto.
Mr. H. Brown, C.E., Toronto.
Mr. R. H. Bethune, Toronto.
Mr. G. S. Bethune, Toronto.
Mr. H. Bovell, Toronto.
Mr. John Carter, Toronto.
Mr. John R. Cartwright, Toronto.
Mr. C. J. Campbell, Toronto.
Mr. S. B. Harman, Toronto.
Mr. A. MacLean Howard, Toronto.
Mr. Elmes Henderson, Toronto.
Mr. John C. Kemp, Toronto.
Dr. W. J. Johnson, Toronto.
Dr. E. H. Kertland, Toronto.
Mr. J. H. Plummer, Bay City, Mich.
Mr. A. P. Poussette, Peterborough.
Mr. Alex. Marling, Toronto.
Mr. W. T. O'Reilly, Toronto.
Mr. W. Sutherland Taylor, Toronto.
Dr. Ridley, Hamilton.
Mrs. Broughall, Toronto.
Mrs. Barwick, Toronto.
Mrs. J. R. Cartwright, Toronto.
Mrs. H. Bovell, Toronto.
Mrs. Wm. Baldwin, Toronto.
Mrs. W. Wilcocks Baldwin, Toronto.
Mrs. J. D. Cayley, Toronto.
Mrs. H. W. Davies, Toronto.
Mrs. R. Harrison, Toronto.
Mrs. A. MacLean Howard, Toronto.
Mrs. Richard Miller, St. Catharines.
Mrs. Morgan, Toronto.
Mrs. J. C. Kemp, Toronto.
Mrs. W. T. O'Reilly, Toronto.
Mrs. Christopher Robinson, Toronto.
Mrs. W. Sutherland Taylor, Toronto.
Miss Boulton, Toronto.
Miss Featherstonhaugh, Toronto.
Miss Goldie, Toronto.
Miss Maynard, Toronto.
Miss Strachan, Toronto.
Miss Storey, Toronto.

Convener of General Committee—Mr. John C. Kemp.
Treasurer—Mr. John Carter.
Secretary—Mr. A. Marling.
Convener of Ladies' Sub-Committee—Mrs. Broughall.
Trustees of Building and Endowment Fund—
Mr. John Carter, Toronto.
Mr. R. H. Bethune, Cashier, Dominion Bank, Toronto.
Mr. John C. Kemp, Manager, Canadian Bank of Commerce, Toronto.

THE ENGLISH COMMITTEE:

Clergy

The Rev. Robert Gregory, Canon of St. Paul's (afterwards Dean of St. Paul's).
The Rev. H. P. Liddon, D.D., Canon of St. Paul's.
The Rev. Edward King, Canon of Christ Church and Professor of Pastoral Theology in the University of Oxford. (afterwards the famous Bishop of Lincoln).
The Rev. C. W. Furse, Hon. Canon of Christ Church, Vicar of Cuddesdon, and Principal of Cuddesdon Theological College.
The Rev. T. T. Carter, Hon. Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and Warden of the House of Mercy, Clewer.
The Rev. R. C. Kirkpatrick, Vicar of St. Augustine's, Kilburn.
The Rev. C. E. Brooke, Vicar of St. John the Divine, Kennington.
The Rev. George Greenwood, Warden of the Guild of St. Luke, and Chaplain of the Guild of All Saints, Margaret Street.

Laymen

The Right Honourable Lord Forbes.
The Honourable Charles L. Wood (the late Lord Halifax).
Alfred Meadows, Esquire, M.D., Physician to St. Mary's Hospital.
John Walter Lea, Esquire.
Dr. Meymott Tidy, Professor of Chemistry, etc., at the London Hospital.
Henry O. Wakeman, Esquire, Bursar of Keble College, Oxford.
Henry Wagner, Esquire.

THE DEDICATION OF THE COMMUNITY

While the fundamental principles of the Religious state are common to all Communities, yet the special dedication chosen by each one will usually suggest some characteristic which is intended to be preeminent in its life. Thus a "Society of the Holy Childhood" might be expected to devote itself to the care of children; an "Order of Saint Francis" to emphasize the vow of poverty; a "Brotherhood of the Sacred Passion" to live a life of reparation.

In the case of this Sisterhood the dedication is to Saint John the Divine. What was the reason for the choice, and what the significance?

The reason was a natural and very human one. During the married life of the Mother Foundress in London, England, she had been in the habit of attending the Church of St. John the Divine, Kennington. There she had forged very close friendships and associations. When the new foundation for Canada was planned it was not surprising that she desired to use the name of the parish which had meant so much to her spiritual life, and to have as its patron the Apostle who had been so near to our Lord.

For a time, however, the choice of the dedication hung in the balance. A group of nurses, not bound by any vows but associated for mutual benefit, had used this name and had been in great financial difficulties, and it was felt that it might be unwise to adopt the same name. As an alternative title, "The Sisters of St. Faith" (in honour of our Holy Religion, not of the saint commemorated on October 6th), was approved, but happily the nurses disbanded in time for the Sisters to assume the name which has grown dear to so many.

The significance of the dedication is twofold:

(1) "The Sisters of Saint John the Divine are dedicated to the undivided service of JESUS CHRIST, after the example of the Beloved Disciple whose name they bear, for the fulfilment of the two-fold law of charity. Like Saint John, they are called to find their joy in fellowship with their Lord, and for this end to forsake all worldly distraction. Like him, they must receive from their Lord all whom He commits to their care, to tend in His Name and for His sake." So runs the opening article of the Community Statutes. One word will sum it up—the word "Love"—the love for GOD and love for mankind which was the refrain of all the teaching of the Apostle of Love.*

(2) It is to be noticed that the dedication is to Saint John the *Divine,* not to Saint John the Evangelist, though they were one

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*I S. John V. 1-3; S. John XIII. 34.

and the same Apostle, and herein lies the second significance. The characteristic of the Patron's life which the Community emphasizes is not so much his work of teaching and preaching the Gospel as his work of contemplation. Like the eagle, which is his emblem and theirs, the Sisters are to strive in their spiritual lives to soar up, and to gaze steadly into the Face of God, the Sun of Righteousness.

GROWTH AND EXPANSION 1884-1938

Although the Sisterhood of S. John the Divine actually came into being on the Festival of the Nativity, B.V.M., the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross—September 14th, 1884, was an auspicious day for the beginning of its corporate life. Was it not dedicated in honour of the Apostle who had stood beside the Cross of Christ? And did it not fulfil, in anticipation at least, the definition of a Religious Order as given in 1930 by the Bishops at Lambeth:—"A body of devout* persons who have given their lives in complete sacrifice as a supreme act of worship to God and for His immediate service?"

The "devout persons" who met in the plain little house on Robinson Street, with its four chairs which had to be moved from room to room wherever they were needed, were the Mother Foundress and one Novice who had had a short training at Peekskill. Shortly afterwards they were joined by the second woman who had been waiting to test her vocation.

The "immediate service" lay all about them in the Parish of S. Matthias, and began on the very first day. Visiting from house to house to find out the needs of the people, soon included the daily carrying of food to the poor and aged. Then came the provision of a dinner twice a week at "S. John's House" (as the early convent was called) for convalescents, who were chiefly young mothers in need of more nourishing food than their homes could supply. There was also much teaching to be done, and the gathering in of more children for S. Matthias' Sunday School. One of the most pressing needs of all, however, was the care of the sick poor, and as the little Community began to cope with it, they realized that it could not be done in the people's own homes. There *must* be a hospital. Nursing must be the first active work of the Sisterhood.

I. Works of Mercy

Just at this juncture the Synod of Toronto offered to send a party of women to Moose Jaw to nurse the soldiers wounded in the

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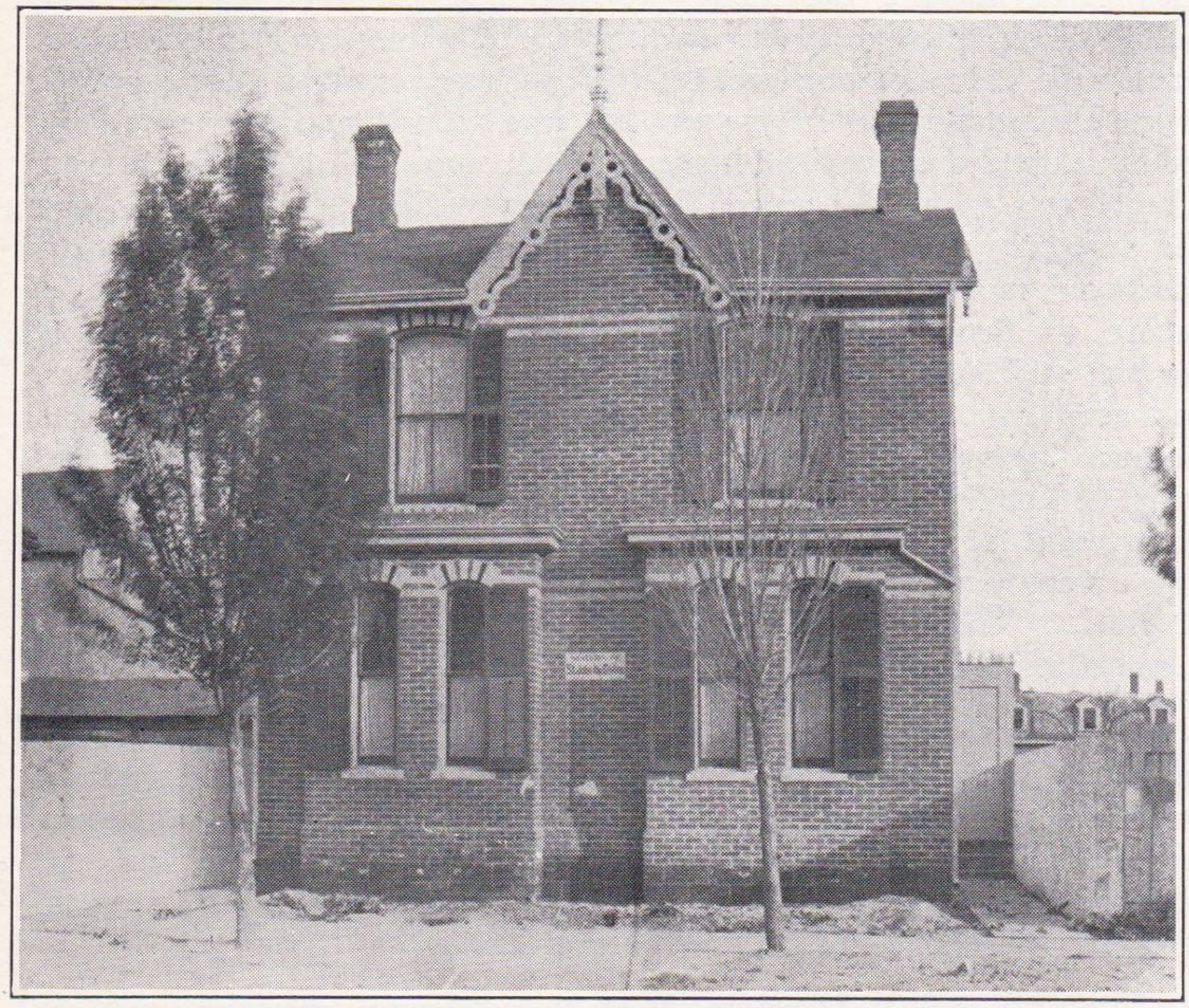
*"Devout"—in its correct sense of "devoted" or "given to God by pledge or vow."

Northwest Rebellion which was then going on. The Government accepted the offer very gratefully upon condition that they were "not amateurs, but trained nurses under one head". The Mother Foundress was asked to undertake the work, and early in 1885 she left for the West with two postulants and three fully trained nurses. They had the distinction of being the first women on official record in Canada to nurse the military, and amongst the treasured possessions of the Sisters to-day are the two medals awarded afterwards to the Mother Foundress.



THE FIRST CONVENT, ON ROBINSON STREET, TORONTO

When the little party returned to Toronto towards the end of the summer they found that the benefactors and friends whom they had left behind had not been idle, and that the first Saint John's Hospital was waiting to be occupied. It is true that it was only a small house at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Robinson Street, connected with the Convent (as may be seen in the picture) by a covered passageway, and that it had little in the way of surgical equipment, but it had several private rooms for paying patients and a Public Ward with eight beds for those who needed free care. Great was the joy of the Doctors, of the poor and of the Community itself. To the pioneer nursing of soldiers in Canada, the Order was now to add the distinction of opening the first Hospital to specialize in the care of women. By its provision for private patients, it was

also to lead the way in dispelling the old-fashioned prejudice against hospitals which was then so prevalent. The "home atmosphere" which was introduced into the little house on Euclid Avenue has always been one of the traditions of the Houses of the Community.

It was not long before the Hospital outgrew its quarters, and a move became necessary, for 465 persons had come under its care during the first three years. Of these 259 had been free patients.

The friends who had been working so indefatigably now set themselves to raise the money to purchase land and to erect the buildings on Major Street in which the Convent and the Hospital have made their home since 1889. With wise prevision they planned, as they thought, for fifty years of growth and expansion, but the reality exceeded even their highest expectation. In 1893 the present Chapel was erected—because the temporary Chapel in what is now the refectory had grown too small—and behind it a wing with additional rooms for the Sisters. Subsequently, as need arose, houses facing on Brunswick Avenue were obtained to provide residences for the staff and nurses in training, for a Medical Wing, for guests, and even for some Sisters, since the Community had outgrown the number of cells provided in the Convent proper and in the new wing. The Medical Building was subsequently converted into a department for infants needing special care, and although medical cases were occasionally admitted the Hospital remained primarily surgical. The average number of patients for whom there was accomodation was seventy-five.

In the early days the Sisters themselves did all the nursing in the Hospital, both by night and day. Then, as the work increased outside as well as inside its walls, it became necessary to make use of secular help and finally to establish the Training School for Nurses, from which it always strove to send out graduates imbued with the highest ideals of their profession.

The next radical development of Hospital work was the establishment in 1922 of the Out-Patient Department, known as S. John's Medical Clinic, which was held in the basement of the Old Garrison Church (S. John's) on Portland Street, and for which part of the equipment was given as a memorial to the men from that parish who had laid down their lives in the Great War. The fact that 650 different people, men, women and children, were treated during the first year shows how great was the need for such work in that district. The Out-Patient Department grew and developed in various directions, but most notably, perhaps, in the pre-natal care of women and the Baby Clinic. It owes more than we can say to the splendid band of physicians and surgeons who, under the direction of Dr. J. T. Fotheringham, and later of Dr. H. E. Clutterbuck gave their services gratuitously week after week.

One lively interlude in Hospital routine that came from the growth of the Out-Patient Department was the arrival twice, and sometimes three times a week of a batch of children for tonsilectomy, from the special ear, nose and throat clinic, and the last development was a "squint clinic" where a nursing Sister worked closely with the oculist as he rectified casts in the eye, not only by surgery and optical aids but also by patient exercising.

While writing of the Hospital work of the Community, we must not omit the House of Rest—a small Convalescent Home which was carried on for nearly ten years at Mount S. John on Bayview Avenue, and was then closed because the property was offered for sale. With the developments taking place in that part of the city it was felt to be no longer suitable for its original purpose.

For some time the question of the future of S. John's Hospital was given careful consideration by those concerned. In these days of large hospitals equipped with all the latest and most expensive furnishings and appliances, especially in the realm of surgery, it is difficult for the smaller hospitals to exist, and yet many people prefer a small hospital, with its quiet, home-like surroundings, its enclosure and its greater individual care. This preference, however, did not justify the asking any longer that surgeons should be willing to work under conditions so much less convenient than those in the operating theatres of the large hospitals, and rather than impose upon their unfailing courtesy and co-operation it was decided in the Spring of 1937 that the Hospital should be closed. The fact that the City would be unlikely to continue indefinitely to make up to the hospitals their annual deficits made this step a matter of financial necessity and honour.

This did not mean, however, that S. John's Hospital work ceased to exist. Before the last patient was discharged from Major Street **S. John's Convalescent Hospital** at Newtonbrook, a few miles north of the city limits, had been formally opened by His Excellency, Baron Tweedsmuir. To meet the urgent need for convalescent care of many patients discharged from surgical wards had long been a dream of the Sisters, and more particularly since the Bayview house was closed. For a while the plan was considered of building a Convalescent Hospital at Aurora, on the site purchased by the Community in 1930 with the generous gift of Mrs. Kilgour, who knew both the hope of doing convalescent work and also the need for a new Convent. Eventually, however, it was deemed inexpedient to build a hospital at such a distance from the City, and the money raised by public campaign in the Autumn of 1933 was used to purchase the site on Cummer Avenue, Newtonbrook, and to build the first unit of a Convalescent Hospital, with a capacity of about sixty-five beds, and accommodation for some twenty Sisters and nurses.

The interval between 1933 and 1937 seemed long, but it was determined that the new hospital should open free of debt, and much time lapsed while plans were modified in order to meet the funds available. Meanwhile many friends were working hard in various ways to provide furnishings, so that when the doors were opened the china and linen cupboards were amply stocked, and the pretty blankets and gay chintzes at once called forth happy comment.

This Hospital does not belong to the Community as did the old S. John's. Control of the funds was vested in a representative Board of Trustees, and its affairs are managed by a separate Board of Directors. That the Hospital is meeting a real need is very evident, for before a year has passed since the opening, all the beds have been occupied on more than one occasion, and at times there is a waiting list.

Nor has the Community ceased to participate in active Hospital work. In October, 1936, three members of the Sisterhood went to Nova Scotia to take over the direction of **All Saints' Hospital, Springhill.** This is a small Church hospital, with open doors for every type of case, from maternity to mine accidents, and the Sisters find a wide field for their interest and energies.

The second important work undertaken by the Community—for we must go back now to 1887,—was the **Church Home.** The work of the Sisters had revealed the need of the aged and friendless, not only amongst the poor, but amongst those whose lot had fallen once in happier surroundings. To meet this need a house was taken in Larch Street for the care of twenty men and women. One of the outstanding features of the Church Home is still the fact that it is open to married couples who need such a haven for their old age. Within six years of the opening, the demand for rooms necessitated the taking of a larger house on John Street, and twelve years later this had to be replaced by Bellevue House, near S. Stephen's Church. This also proved too small, and in 1907 Sir Edmund and Lady Osler added a wing in memory of their daughter-in-law, of which the corner-stone was laid by the Bishop of London on his first visit to Canada. The capacity of the Home is now about forty-five.

In 1919 it became necessary to rebuild the older portion of the house and the opportunity was used to enlarge the Chapel. From time to time other improvements have been made, and in the last few years much care has been bestowed upon the garden, which, through the generosity of friends, is now a real haven of beauty during the summer months.

A similar work is being carried on in the former hospital building, which within a few days of the departure of the last patient

was re-opened as **S. John's House,** and quickly filled with elderly ladies who are finding in it a real home. The need for this work of mercy is very evident and one of the houses on Brunswick Avenue is used as an Annex for some of the applicants for whom there are no rooms available in the main building.

Mission Work began, of course, in the Robinson Street days; it was continued in the Mission House at Seaton Village* from 1891 to 1916, and was followed by several years of similar work in All Hallows' Mission House. Since then it has taken the form, in Toronto, of regular visiting of the sick in the General Hospital, the Hospital for Incurables and the Weston Sanitarium; of the rescue and care of individual cases; of the charge of Humewood House when the Superintendent is on holiday and of the provision of food and clothing for the poor who come through many channels.

Wherever the Sisters may be the unfortunate and needy turn to them, no matter what type of work they have come to do officially, and within the last ten years two definite Mission Houses have been placed in charge of the Community. In Montreal, **S. Michael's Mission** is maintained by the parish of S. John the Evangelist, and three or four Sisters have been working there since 1929, while in 1936 they ventured to their furthest point in the West when three Sisters went to open **S. John's House, Edmonton,** which serves several parishes in the city as well as giving shelter to many needy cases from the surrounding prairie.

Mission work in Toronto has developed during the past year to include a shelter for evicted families. **Brunswick House** was the first of the buildings formerly used for hospital purposes to be re-opened in entirely different guise. In co-operation with the Toronto Welfare Bureau board and lodging is given here to women and children who are temporarily homeless, and many and varied are the ministrations now carried on by the Sisters working there.

II. Religious Education

In the beginning of the Community life the Mother Foundress had hoped to take up educational work, but it proved to be only the third important line of development which presented itself. In 1892 the Community was asked to take over the charge of a boarding school for girls in Oshawa, which was in great financial difficulties. There was imminent danger of its being lost to the Church, and although the works in hand were already taxing the

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*Seaton Village was at that time a new district on the outskirts of Toronto, where the failure of a land boom had caused great poverty and distress. When prosperity returned the relief work done by the Mission House was no longer needed, but Sunday School teaching was continued in S. Cyprian's Parish.

THE CONVENT CHAPEL

resources of the Community almost to their limit, the Mother Foundress felt that she must make the effort to provide Sisters, if those who were interesting themselves in the matter could secure the funds to purchase the property. This was done successfully, and from February, 1893, until June, 1932, Bishop Bethune College was under the Sisters' care. The original house, situated in large and beautiful grounds, was enlarged in various ways, and in 1929 another fine property across the road was purchased to provide for the Junior School. With the two buildings, there was then comfortable accommodation for seventy-five boarding pupils. Unfortunately the period of world financial depression followed close upon this expansion; smaller private schools were among the first types of institution unable to weather the storm, and the School was closed in the summer of 1932.

During several years an Elementary School for boys and girls was carried on by the Sisters in Toronto, but owing to the changing conditions of the neighbourhood surrounding the Convent, it had to be given up.

For the first period of its existence the Community followed the wise policy of building solid foundations. Its members were being trained in the fundamental principles of the Religious Life; its Branch Houses were establishing strong traditions and high ideals; its teaching and practice were being based upon the essentials of the Catholic Faith as they are set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. The result was the winning of confidence from those in authority in the Church, and the coming of many appeals for the work of the Sisters farther afield. It was not until 1918, however, that the Community felt justified in launching out from the neighbourhood of Toronto where the work had grown so quietly and steadily that it had required all their resources to carry it on.

In 1918 a request was received from the Synod of Qu'Appelle for Sisters to establish and take charge of the Diocesan School in Regina. It was felt to be GOD'S will that they should do so and this was the beginning of their educational work in the West, which has reached out by various channels in other directions as well. The **Qu'Appelle Diocesan School** itself has had the struggles incidental to all educational work in our western country, which is so dependent financially upon conditions of crops and weather; but it has survived the ordeal of eight successive years of drought, and it is felt that as a form of missionary work for the Church it has been worth the effort and sacrifice entailed.

The academic work at the Qu'Appelle Diocesan School conforms to Government requirements and is at present in charge of a secular Head Mistress, and there are both Sisters and secular mistresses on the staff. The features upon which the greatest emphasis is placed are the definitely religious teaching, the building of character, and the maintainance of a home-like atmosphere.

Another branch of educational work undertaken by the Community is the Sunday School By Post. For some time this was carried on for the Diocese of Qu'Appelle within the walls of the School by Miss West, a pioneer in Sunday School Van work in the Diocese. Then the assistance of a Sister was enlisted, and when **S. Christopher House** was opened by the Diocesan Board of Religious Education, to give more room for the ever-growing work, members of the Community formed part of its staff.

In 1935 the Sisters were asked by the Bishop of Algoma to undertake the Sunday School By Post work in that Diocese, in co-operation with the Cowley Fathers of Bracebridge, Ontario, and for three years now this work has been carried on by one or more Sisters from an office at the Convent.

The Community has done Sunday School work in Toronto from the earliest days, and has sometimes had Sisters and Novices with classes in as many as seventeen parishes. At one time Teacher Training Classes met at the Convent for any who desired to fit themselves more fully for the work, and during one or two winters the General Board of Religious Education lecture courses for the Toronto Deanery were given in the Guild Room. As a result of the great expansion of the work these are now given in Trinity College and Sisters and Novices attend both to teach and be taught.

All members of the Community during their Novitiate are given very definite and thorough training in such subjects as Holy Scripture, Church Doctrine, Church History, etc. Some have also taken part of the course prescribed for the Archbishop of Canterbury's examination, and in 1927 three Sisters, who had completed it, obtained the Lambeth Diploma, and now hold the Archbishop's License to teach Theology.

To come back, however, to the growth of the educational works:—In 1927 the Community was asked by the Child Welfare Council of Canada to undertake an experiment in the care of underprivileged children, in order that the possibilities of training and the need for proper provision might be demonstrated. It was felt that the special qualifications needed for such work should be found in Sisters. Several members of the Community were accordingly given the other training necessary, and for more than ten years Sisters have taken charge of the family of children, averaging sixteen in number, and with an average *mental* age of eight, though their years vary from seven to the twenties, who comprise the household of **Shernfold School** in Ottawa.

Most of these children remain in the care of the School for all or part of the summer holidays and since 1933 they have spent the weeks from the end of June until early September at **Camp Haydon,**

a summer home purchased for them on Christie Lake in the Rideau district. Here ordinary school routine is abandoned and they are able to enter quite fully into many normal camp pastimes; particularly do they delight in the daily time for bathing in the lake, and a number of them have learned to swim.

A similar type of work to that at Ottawa is being carried on at **S. John's-on-the-Hill,** the Aurora property to which reference has already been made. Beginning as a possible continuation school for older girls from Shernfold School it has developed more particularly into a home and school for epileptic children, and at present seven little ones are cared for there by two qualified Sisters, the physical and academic needs of each being met individually, and the element of fear which always accompanies this handicap, being reduced to a minimum.

S. Christina School at Cooperstown, N.Y. was placed under the care of the Community in 1930. This was the first work the Sisters had undertaken outside Canada, but the call had come so long and so insistently that they felt it to be GOD'S will for them to accept it. S. Christina is part of the Susan Fennimore Cooper Foundation, and the work involved is of a peculiarly responsible type, as many of the children are sent there because of difficulties in their own lives or in their homes.

After eight years of very happy work among them the Community has this year, 1938, decided to withdraw the Sisters, for the Board is having to face the problem of re-organization and change of policy, and it is indeed still uncertain whether the School will be continued after this summer. The various Government authorities are at present sending children to foster-homes rather than to institutions, and however home-like and careful for the individual the institution may be, it finds the County no longer committing to its care the type of child for whom foster-parents can be found, and S. Christina School has been greatly affected by this change.

Bishop Mountain Hall, in Quebec City, is another institution which has been under the care of the Community since the autumn of 1927. It was founded more than a century ago as an orphanage for children—of the type that Dickens knew so well! When it was placed in charge of the Sisters it was decided to try also to meet the need for a Church hostel where girls could live who came from the country to attend the High School. The building was larger than was necessary for the so-called "orphans" who were occupying it at that time. After very necessary renovations had been made, three Sisters were sent to Quebec to provide the home-life, with its care and mother-love, that was needed by these little ones. While the children all go out to school for their secular studies, there is, of course, a

great deal of religious and other instruction to be given, and so Bishop Mountain Hall may be classed as an educational work.

The subject of Religious Education is a very far-reaching one, for it includes not only such works as we have described, but also the innumerable opportunities which come in the way of preparing candidates for the Sacraments of the Church; giving courses of instruction at a Summer School or Conference; holding Bible or Study Classes; suggesting courses of reading; to say nothing of the channel which "S. John's Messenger", the Community Magazine, affords as a medium for the teaching of the Faith.

In concluding this section of the growth and expansion of the work of the Sisters, may we emphasize once again its vital importance. The remedy for the problems and the evils in the world to-day will not be found until people everywhere are brought back to the simple fundamental facts of the Catholic Faith enshrined in the Creed, until they are taught to say "Our Father", if not necessarily "Hail Mary", although it is recognized that to the Blessed Virgin was due the upbuilding of the beautiful home-life at Nazareth.

III. Other Departments of Work

First there is the **Church Embroidery Room,** which traces its history back to the early days on Robinson Street. We realize that the Mother Foundress lost no time in its establishment, for the semi-weekly dinners for convalescents were held in the "room used for sewing and embroidery". The talent and training which she herself brought to this work set a very high standard which the Community has been trying ever since to maintain. In the beginning much voluntary assistance was given by Associates and others who were skilled needlewomen, but of late years it has been found better to have it done only by the Sisters and a small staff of paid helpers. Vestments, Altar linen, and every form of embroidery done in the Church Work Room, are being used in the worship of God not only in Canada, but in all parts of the United States and in England. Enough orders come in to keep the workers very busy, but they sometimes regret that the production of Church furnishings is becoming more and more commercialised, and that with this trend there are on the market machine-made and machine-embroidered vestments and hangings of inferior materials, indicating one more way in which the modern world fails to give their due recognition to true craftsmanship and the riches of patient labour.

The **Altar Bread Room** is another department which is doing its share to aid in the reverent offering of the Holy Eucharist. It has been very interesting to watch the growth of this work. Each annual

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(Note:—It is to be clearly understood that the buildings in which the Sisters work at Regina, Ottawa, Quebec, Montreal, Edmonton and Springhill, do not belong to the Community. The Sisters are merely in charge of the work carried on).

report shows a notable increase in the figures given and many hundreds of thousands of Wafers and of Priests Hosts are sent out every year.

Parochial work has always taken a large share of the time of the Community. The charge of Mother's Meetings, branches of the Mother's Union and other Societies, the visiting of Sunday School children in their homes, the supervision of Altar Guilds, and requests for Sisters to address meetings of various kinds, take them into many parishes in Toronto and in the places where Branch Houses are established.

One type of work that grows steadily and for which the Community hopes to see an ever-growing demand is connected with **Retreats.** For some years now, Quiet Afternoons and Evenings have been held every few weeks during the winter months in the Church Home and Convent Chapels, and rarely a month passes without a request from someone to visit the Convent for a private retreat. The Sisters try always to have rooms available for these retreatants and hope that some day it may be possible for them to provide a permanent Retreat House for individuals and groups seeking Quiet in this way. Sisters are from time to time called upon to conduct Quiet Hours or Days of Retreat both in the city and in places further afield, and are always glad to respond to any such opportunity.

The newest work is in connection with **The Terrace,** a residence for business and professional women opened in four of the Brunswick Avenue houses in the autumn of 1937. Begun as an experiment to provide income from the houses left empty by the closing of the Hospital, it, too, seems to be meeting a need, for nearly all the rooms have been occupied by women who appreciate a hostel of not quite the ordinary type.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS, FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES

In the preceding pages we have told of some of the outstanding lines along which the Community has grown and developed since its foundation in 1884. The work which was begun then by the Mother Foundress passed in 1916 into the hands of the present Mother Superior, Sister Dora, S.S.J.D. The spiritual foundation laid by the First Warden, the Reverend Ogden P. Ford, was carried on for many years by Dr. C. J. S. Bethune, then by Father Davenport, who in turn was followed by Dr. Jenks, of the General Theological Seminary, N.Y. The present Warden is the Right Reverend J. C. Roper, Archbishop of Ottawa, whose association with the Community dates back to 1886 when he succeeded Father Ford in the duties of Chaplain, and the present Chaplain is the Reverend C. J. S. Stuart, M.A., Rector of S. Thomas' Church, Toronto. Many well-known priests have also assisted in the spiritual upbuilding of the Order from time to time

THE MOTHER DORA, S.S.J.D.

by giving retreats, and by other ministrations. Among them were such men as Bishop Hall, Bishop Osborne, Bishop Frere, C.R., Father Benson, S.S.J.E., Father Bull, S.S.J.E., Father Bickersteth, C.R., Father Convers and Father Sharp. There is, besides a long line of faithful Chaplains who have served in all the Houses, whose names are too numerous to mention.

No story of the Community would be complete without reference to the faithful body of Associates. Beginning with two or three they now number more than seven hundred, and many are in Paradise. Their first meeting for organisation, of which there is record, took place at S. Stephen's Rectory, on November 27th, 1893, when Mrs. Broughall was elected as Convener, and Mrs. Robinson as Secretary. During the last twenty years the Associates have been organised into Wards, each group doing some special work for the Community, and there are now Wards in Vancouver, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Regina, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, St. John, Peterborough, London, Ont., New York City, Cooperstown, N.Y., Rochester, N.Y., Detroit and England, as well as smaller groups in other cities and many individual Associates whose homes are not near enough for affiliation with any group, but who are in regular correspondence with the Sister Warden, and who are bound closely to the Sisters by their prayer-life. It is by the power of this prayer-life that the greatest help has been given by the Associates. Their daily intercession for the Community and their annual retreat has long been an integral part of their rule. When the retreats for Associates actually began, the writer does not know, but it was very early, for in 1892 and 1893 they were conducted by Father Benson, of Cowley, who was in America at that time, and they have gone on regularly ever since.

In the Autumn of 1937 the Toronto Associates initiated a new venture in the form of a week-end Conference. Members came from many different centres for a Quiet Day on the Sunday, followed by Round Table discussions on the Monday. A closer co-ordination of groups has resulted from this, and they hope it may be an annual event.

The Toronto Associates frequently help with various tasks at the Convent; the Sisters rely upon them for evening telephone duty in S. John's House, and the Altar Bread Department could not fill its orders without their help in packing the wafers.

There are also a number of Priest Associates who aid the Community by their prayers and interest, and by the regular offering of the Holy Eucharist on its behalf. These priests are ministering in many different places and the Sisters hope that many more will ask for this special spiritual link with the Community, conscious as they are of the power of the prayers uniting them in the Communion of Saints throughout the world.

THE SPIRIT AND SCOPE OF THE COMMUNITY

"*Whatsoever He saith unto you do it*"—This has been the motto of the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine since its foundation. The words are those of Our Lady, but they embody the spirit of Saint John as well.

It is not hard to imagine what prompted the choice of the motto for the little band of women setting out in 1884 on their great adventure for GOD. When the Mother Foundress was trained by the Sisters of Saint Mary, what was more natural than for her to become steeped in the spirit of the Blessed Virgin? What was more natural in *any* case than to have a great devotion to the Mother who was committed from the Cross to the care of the Beloved Apostle, and to cherish her few recorded sayings? And what other motto could have been so suited to all the circumstances of the new Community?

Obedience and Adventure! Both, so says the motto, are to be marks of the Sisters—and the Sisterhood—of Saint John the Divine.

That does not mean for a moment that these marks are peculiar to this Order, nor that we are claiming for its members any high standard of attainment above others. What it means is simply that they supply the key to the history of the development of the Sisterhood, that they have been and are the guiding principles of its life, both corporately and individually.

First—Obedience to lawful authority in the Church. Loyalty to the teaching and practice of the Anglican Communion as a true part of the Church Catholic. Before the Community was begun, the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese was sought and he was asked to become Visitor. In all the years that have followed, no new work has been undertaken, no radical change made in the Rule of Life or Customary without the knowledge and approval of the Visitor or the Diocesan concerned. This may have seemed at times to retard the development of the Community. As a matter of fact it has strengthened and stabilized it.

Secondly—Adventure! While the Community has held fast to the essential principles of the Religious Life, it has tried to meet each new emergency, to adapt itself to the needs of the age and of the country, in the spirit of Our Lord Himself. Did He not break through many of the traditions which had grown up in Israel? Did He not pause in a journey of great importance to perform an act of mercy to a poor woman or a blind man? Did he not surprise the guests at Cana and give the servants a thrill of adventure when He performed His first miracle with their co-operation?

For more than fifty years now He has been making His will known to the Community—sometimes as a Voice in the silence, sometimes in

an unfolding vision of His purpose, sometimes in the guidance of spiritual directors, sometimes in the conjunction of circumstances—and always the Sisters have striven to follow what He has made manifest, to co-operate with His Divine purpose.

In the early days of the foundation it seemed as though the vocation of the Community, as the first native Order in the Dominion, were to the service of the Church in Canada. The country and its needs were so vast, the workers so few. It is still felt that, so far as active works are concerned, Canada is the vineyard in which the Sisters are called to labour chiefly; but GOD made known His will that for a while they should take charge of a certain work in the United States, and they went adventuring there. It may be that some day He may call them to a House in the foreign mission field, they have often discussed the possibility and the preparation needed, and if He does, they trust they may be found ready. They exist only to be used, as GOD wills, in the service of the *whole* Church—not only for any *one* country, or diocese, or party, or section of it.

The scope of the work of the Community is bounded only by "the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that a woman may perform." But even though the "corporal works" lie mainly in Canada, the "spiritual work", the "Apostolate of Prayer", is world-wide, or more truly, may we say that it is "wide as the Catholic Church", for it reaches out in the Church Expectant and Triumphant as well as in the "Church Militant here on earth!"

At times the Sisters wonder whether the works as well as the spiritual growth are hampered by the inadequacy of the Convent buildings. For some years they spoke frequently of "Building Fund" and "New Convent" but with the financial depression and subsequent destitution crying for relief and then the concentrated effort to establish the Convalescent Hospital, their own needs had to be put into the background. But they do not forget that men of old time sometimes showed their gratitude to Almighty GOD by gifts and bequests for monastic buildings, and they believe that in GOD's time the means will be forthcoming to provide them with a new Convent Home.

The Jubilee of the Community was celebrated in September 1934, and the Sisters rejoice to know that their thanksgiving was shared by the Church throughout the Dominion. Besides the growth within the Community itself, both in its numbers and in its active work, there has been much growth outside in the breaking down of old prejudices, and in the dissemination throughout Canada of wider knowledge of the principles of the Religious Life. It may be that people yet are too apt to value Religious Orders more for the sake of their works than for the sake of their life. But at any rate they are learning that *Sisters are for the Church,* and *not the Church for Sisters.* For

the Church—primarily by giving their lives in *complete sacrifice* to God, that He may use them in whatever way He wills, whether it be in the hidden life of prayer or in outward works of mercy, whether amid the beauty of a worship expressed in glorious ceremonial, or in the teaching of the Faith in the poverty of a bare little mission Chapel.

There have been mistakes and failures at times, many of them, for Sisters are only human, but by such ways are often learned some of life's best lessons, and as the readers hear of the Sisters, and of these unpleasant things as well as of the more pleasing, will they not sometimes offer on their behalf this Community prayer:—

> O Almighty God, defend we beseech Thee, and rule by Thy Holy Spirit, Thy servants the Sisters of Saint John the Divine. Fill their hearts with love to Thee and to one another, and charity towards all men. Give them all they need for soul and body. Add to their numbers and bless their work. Keep them as wise virgins, faithful, humble and obedient ever serving Thee meekly with pure hearts, in the spirit of poverty and peace. Reveal Thyself to them ever more and more. Draw them from earthly things to give them rest and joy in Thee, and make this Society to please Thee and to tarry till the Master come. Amen.

Directory

THE REVEREND MOTHER SUPERIOR, S.S.J.D.,
S. John's Convent, Major Street, Toronto.

THE CHURCH WORKROOM,
S. John's Convent, Major Street, Toronto.

THE ALTAR BREAD DEPARTMENT,
S. John's Convent, Major Street, Toronto.

S. JOHN'S HOUSE
28 Major Street, Toronto.

THE TERRACE
33-41 Brunswick Avenue, Toronto.

THE CHURCH HOME FOR THE AGED,
78 Oxford Street and 87 Bellevue Avenue, Toronto.

THE CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL,
Cummer Avenue, Newtonbrook, Toronto.

ALL SAINTS' HOSPITAL,
Springhill, Nova Scotia.

S. JOHN'S-ON-THE-HILL,
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BISHOP MOUNTAIN HALL,
225 Grand Allée, Quebec, P.Q.

SHERNFOLD SCHOOL,
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QU'APPELLE DIOCESAN SCHOOL,
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(Sunday School by Post),
2238 Toronto Street, Regina, Saskatchewan.

S. MICHAEL'S MISSION,
181 Dorchester Street West, Montreal, P.Q.

S. JOHN'S HOUSE,
11714, 92nd Street, Edmonton, Alberta.

Orders are taken for illuminated cards, and for fancy articles.

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Form of Bequest

I give the sum of dollars (free from all succession duties) to the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine (Incorporated), Toronto, to be used as the Board of Directors of the Sisterhood shall see fit, and I declare that the receipt of the Superior and of the Bursar shall be a full discharge to my executors in respect of this legacy.

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from the Church Literature Department at the Convent for ten cents each.